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Chairman Davis Applauds OPM's Decision to Renegotiate the 2009 Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) Surgical Benefit

Rep. Danny K. Davis (D-IL) is pleased that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) answered his call to give Federal employees more time to consider their health plan options

Washington D.C. – Responding to mounting pressure from Chairman Davis and Members of the Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and District of Columbia Subcommittee, earlier today, OPM informed the Subcommittee that it is working closely with BCBS to address the issue of benefits for elective surgeries by non-participating providers. OPM is also advising agencies that they should be prepared to continue to accept “belated” requests for enrollment changes after open season.

Over four million Blue Cross Blue Shield subscribers would have been subjected to a 2009 BCBS benefit change that would have required beneficiaries to pay up to \$7,500 for each surgery performed by a non-participating physician, except in the case of medical emergencies. Previously, beneficiaries have been responsible for paying 25 percent of the plan’s allowance, plus 100 percent of any billed amount above the plan allowance.

“OPM is doing the right thing,” Chairman Davis said. “I am delighted that OPM will be working with BCBS, and the other Federal Employees Health Benefits carriers, to take a second look at

how to address the payment of surgical claims billed by non-participating providers. Subscribers who want to change carriers after reviewing any additional information about plan benefits will have until the end of January 2009 to select a health plan but must first go to their personnel office and complete an enrollment request form and fill in "belated open season enrollment/change." OPM is moving quickly to close negotiations and employees are urged to make their plan selection at the earliest possible date.

Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) remarked, "When Chairman Danny Davis flew here to hold a hearing on the huge \$7,500 per surgery increase, the subcommittee signaled that transparency, not hidden costs, was expected from both OPM and Blue Cross Blue Shield. Although OPM appeared reluctant to embrace the obvious remedy of an extension of the open season for subscribers, I applaud Associate Director Nancy Kichak for apparently being willing to agree to an extension and a review of the underlying issue of extra costs to subscribers."

"I am very pleased to see that OPM has heeded our advice and extended the open enrollment period. Federal employees and retirees need this extra time to reevaluate their health plans, and I appreciate that they will be given it," stated Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD).

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For further information on the hearing, issue, and testimonies visit:

<http://federalworkforce.oversight.house.gov/>